

We claim:

1. A data collection apparatus, comprising:
 - a user-supportable housing;
 - an optical reader; and
 - a computerized processing system, located in said user-supportable housing, communicatively coupled with said optical reader;wherein said optical reader is operable to read handwritten data and wherein said computerized processing system is operable to store handwritten data read by said optical reader.
2. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, wherein said optical reader is operable to read handwritten data such as a human signature and wherein said computerized processing system is operable to store handwritten data such as a human signature read by said optical reader.
3. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, wherein said optical reader is operable to read handwritten data such as human-generated text and wherein said computerized processing system is operable to store handwritten data such as human-generated text read by said optical reader.

4. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, wherein said optical reader is operable to read handwritten data such as human-generated graphics and wherein said computerized processing system is operable to store handwritten data such as human-generated graphics read by said optical reader.

5. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, wherein said user-supportable housing comprises a handgrip section, said handgrip section having a cross-section of a size capable of being held in one hand with fingers and opposing thumb embracing opposite sides of said handgrip section.

6. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a handwriting receiving component.

7. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a removable handwriting receiving component, physically coupled with said user-supportable housing, wherein said removable handwriting receiving component can be removed from said user-supportable housing by a user.

8. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a user-interface, said user-interface supported by said user-supportable housing, and wherein said user-interface is communicatively coupled with said computerized processing system.

9. The data collection apparatus of claim 1, wherein said optical reader is a digital optical reader, said digital optical reader being capable of communicating read handwritten data to said computerized processing system as digitized data.

10. A method of reading handwritten information with a data collection apparatus, comprising the steps of:

aiming an optical reader at handwritten information, the optical reader communicatively coupled with a computerized processing system of a user-supportable data collection apparatus;

imaging the handwritten information at which the optical reader is aimed;

digitizing the imaged handwritten information; and

storing the digitized handwritten information in the user-supportable data collection apparatus by the computerized processing system.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said aiming step comprises aiming an optical reader at handwritten information including a signature.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the step of verifying a stored signature.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein said storing step stores a signature for future verification.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein said aiming step comprises aiming an optical reader at handwritten information including human-written text.

15. The method of claim 10, wherein said aiming step comprises aiming an optical reader at handwritten information including human-drawn graphics.

16. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:
attaching a handwriting receiving component to a user-supportable data collection apparatus; and
writing handwritten information on the attached handwriting receiving component.

17. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:
attaching a user-removable handwriting receiving component
to a user-supportable data collection apparatus; and
writing handwritten information on the attached user-removable handwriting receiving component.

18. A data collection apparatus, comprising:
means for providing a user-supportable housing;
means for optically reading handwritten information; and
means for computerized processing of read handwritten information, located in said means for providing a user-supportable housing, communicatively coupled with said means for optically reading.

19. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, wherein said means for optically reading is operable to read handwritten data such as a human signature and wherein said means for computerized processing is operable to store handwritten data such as a human signature read by said means for optically reading.

20. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, wherein said means for optically reading is operable to read handwritten data such as human-generated text and wherein said means for computerized processing is operable to store handwritten data such as human-generated text read by said means for optically reading.

21. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, wherein said means for optically reading is operable to read handwritten data such as human-generated graphics and wherein said means for computerized processing is operable to store handwritten data such as human-generated graphics read by said means for optically reading.

22. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, wherein said means for providing a user-supportable housing comprises means for providing a handgrip, said means for providing a handgrip having a cross-section of a size capable of being held in one hand with fingers and opposing thumb embracing opposite sides of said means for providing a handgrip.

23. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, further comprising means for receiving handwritten information.

24. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, further comprising means for providing a user-removable handwriting receiving component, physically coupled with said means for providing a user-supportable housing.

25. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, further comprising means for interfacing with a user, supported by said means for providing a user-supportable housing, and wherein said means for interfacing with a user is communicatively coupled with said means for computerized processing.

26. The data collection apparatus of claim 18, wherein said means for optically reading comprises means for digitally optically reading, said means for digitally optically reading communicating read handwritten data to said means for computerized processing as digitized data.